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Administrator

Democratic Senators Seek Information On Pruitt's Role At Koch-Funded Nonprofit.

[Politico](#) (12/27, Schor) reports that six Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Democrats wrote to Scott Pruitt, President-elect Trump's nominee to head the EPA, on Tuesday, inquiring about "his leading role at a nonprofit group that took money from a central arm of the

Koch brothers' network." They are seeking "the names of donors, meeting information, internal emails, and other details related to his director status" at the Rule of Law Defense Fund, which received \$175,000 in 2014 from the Kochs' Freedom Partners.

Brownfields/Superfund/Other Cleanups

Housing Options Bleak For East Chicago Apartment Residents Displaced By Lead Contamination.

The Gary/Chicago (IN) Crusader (12/27, Wray, Crusader) reports that many of the nearly 1,000 residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex that were forced to relocate due to lead contamination are facing difficulties in finding new housing.


Editorial: EPA, New York Needs To Align Hudson River Cleanup.

An editorial in the Albany (NY) Times Union (12/27) calls on the EPA and New York Department of Environmental Conservation to align their efforts to hold GE accountable on further cleanup of PCBs from the Hudson River. The editorial is a response to last week's declaration from the New York environmental officials that the \$1.5 billion cleanup between the EPA and GE is "a failure."

EPA Begins Radiation Testing In Bridgeton Neighborhood.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch (12/27, Gray) reports that the EPA and regional officials are testing for radiation "in the Spanish Village neighborhood of Bridgeton, where a couple last month filed a lawsuit alleging exposure to radioactive dust." Tests are being done on houses within the "immediate vicinity" of the couple's house.

Whidbey Island-Chemical Contamination.

KOMO-TV  Seattle (12/27, 9:07 p.m. EST) reports, "The number of contaminated sites on Whidbey Island is on the rise. The Navy released new findings today that shows decades-old firefighting chemicals have contaminated wells across the island. ... Since the 70s, the Navy has been using chemicals called PFAs to suppress fires. ... Now, the Navy, county, and EPA, say they've been found in some of the groundwater and wells. PFAs are currently unregulated by the EPA, but in May, the agency put out a health advisory for lifetime exposure. Of the 100 samples tested so far, seven are above the safety range, and the Navy has hundreds more tests to go. The fire retardant has been used for training and survival over and over again, but cleanup remains difficult. ... Right now, there's only a short-term solution if numbers are higher than 70 parts per trillion."

Climate Change

WPost: Experts Getting Better At Proving Human Link To Climate Change.

In an editorial, the Washington Post (12/27) argues that while it is difficult "to prove links between specific instances of extreme weather and the long-term shifting of global temperatures that humans are causing," it "does not suggest there are no links, or that warming is not happening." The Post cites a new report from the American Meteorological Society which shows that "experts are getting better at the science of 'climate attribution.'" The Post says that while the research "comes with uncertainties...as it gets better and becomes more common, it should underscore that global warming will result in more than merely a few inconveniently hot days."

In his Wall Street Journal (12/27) column, Holman Jenkins, Jr. decries the media's use of the term "climate denialist" to describe EPA Administrator-designate Scott Pruitt and others who question the role humans play in influencing climate change.

Recap Of Climate Change Impacts In 2016.

CBS News (12/27, Gunaratna) reports that 2016 was "a milestone year in the continued warming of the planet," from "from unstable agriculture to the drought in California to melting ice sheets to extreme weather events and heat waves, climate change has disrupted virtually every corner of the world." The story goes on to highlight some of the ways climate change was felt in 2016.

Top Energy Issues For 2016-2017: One Theme Trumps All Others. In a contribution to Forbes (12/27, Silverstein), Ken Silverstein listed the top five energy stories of the year. Most of the items were related to the potential impact of the incoming Trump Administration on the energy sector, though Silverstein also highlights the increasing demand for renewable energy among major corporations and electric utilities. He names Southern Company as an example, writing that the firm "has said it would invest \$5 billion in renewables over the next two years."

Clean Tech Firms Retooling For Industrial Chemical Production.

The New York Times (12/27, Hardy) spotlights the latest efforts by clean tech firms to modify the genes of microorganisms to produce industrial chemicals. "This is like agile programming, but for biology," said Eric Steen, a co-founder of Lygos, which is malonic acid used in fragrances from yeasts. "Evolution is the most powerful algorithm ever, but you have to figure out how to stack it in your favor." The start-up was spun out of the University of California, Berkeley with a \$150,000 DOE grant and expanded with other financing. Markus Pompejus at German chemical giant BASF says his firm uses fungi to make vitamin B2 and has licensed with Genomatica, which had previously aimed to produce biofuels but now "fashions E. coli bacteria to spit out the basics of biodegradable shopping bags."

Mooney: Analysis Of Trump's Impact On Climate Change.

Chris Mooney writes for the Washington Post (12/27, Mooney) highlighting attempts to quantify the impact of Donald Trump's election on climate change. One analysis by Climate Interactive "found that if the United States delays addressing climate change domestically for four to eight years, this alone would not be enough to push the globe into the climate 'danger' zone" exceeding a 2°C rise. However, "if US backsliding lasted longer, or if it led to corresponding actions by other countries, then the result could be severe for the planet," Mooney writes. According to Benjamin Sanderson of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, "an eight-year global delay (followed by global emissions cuts), that reduces the chances of staying within the 2-degree C goal from 66 percent to 50 percent."

Scholar Urges Trump To Curb Environmental Rules.

Marlo Lewis at the Competitive Enterprise Institute writes for the Washington Times (12/27, Lewis) that "increasing the affordability of both U.S. and global energy is an important economic and humanitarian objective" for Donald Trump. Lewis urges Trump to exit the Paris Climate Agreement, overturn the Clean Power Plan, and stop the EPA from "claiming huge health benefits for pollution reductions in areas already attaining National Ambient Air Quality Standards." These steps, Lewis argues, "above would go a long way to protect the job creators who produce and depend on affordable energy."

Energy

Trump Administration's Stance On Funding Bioenergy Research Unknown.

USA Today (12/27, Content) reports the University of Wisconsin-Madison, nine years ago, "was awarded its largest single federal grant ever: \$125 million to launch a bioenergy research center." Bioenergy researchers at the university "and their partners at Michigan State University" are now "watching closely to see what the future holds for them under President-elect Donald Trump and his nominee for Energy secretary, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry." The Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center "today is at the heart of research that aims to replace petroleum with renewable sources for chemicals and fuels — particularly agricultural sources that aren't eaten, so that using them as fuel doesn't risk driving up food prices, as can happen with corn-based ethanol." The funding given to the center "is coming to an end in 2017."

Additional Reading.

- **EPA Fracking Report Offers Few Answers On Drinking Water.** AP. (12/28, Daly)

Other News

Perry Expected To Receive Pressure To Resume Nuclear Tests.

The New York Times (12/27, Glanz) reports there is "a deep uncertainty" regarding "the future of a cornerstone of America's nuclear policy: its program to safeguard the nation's atomic stockpile." To make sure "that the country's nuclear weapons still work if needed" the US "has long relied on a program that avoids the need for underground testing," in favor of "using data from supercomputers and laboratory experiments and inspecting the warheads." Some "nuclear analysts" believe "the Trump administration is likely to face decisions" that could lead "to a resumption of testing and perhaps a new global arms race if they are mishandled." Some are also concerned that Trump has chosen former Gov. Rick Perry to head the Energy Department because he has "no expertise in nuclear or technical matters." He is likely "to receive pressure to resume low-yield underground tests to ensure that existing weapons will function, and to help create new bomb designs." Some experts are concerned that if the US "began testing again, it would risk a new arms race."

Perry, Trump Differ Strongly On Wind Power. McClatchy (12/27, Daugherty) reports Donald Trump has for many years expressed his "disdain for wind farms." But wind power in the US "has benefited from billions in federal subsidies over the years," and Trump's choice to be the next secretary of energy, former Gov. Rick Perry, "turned Texas into the country's biggest wind producer with a combination of federal incentives, minimal state regulations and a vast expanse of wind-swept land." Perry will not "be in charge of doling out federal subsidies if he's confirmed" to the post, "but he will play a role in overseeing energy research and promoting wind power." McClatchy says that Perry's "tone" on wind energy "has been markedly different from Trump's." In 2008 at an industry conference, Perry said, "Texas doesn't just believe in the potential of wind energy, we are reaping its benefits already."

Analysis: Perry Pick Signals Favoring Of Traditional Energy Sources. In a piece profiling the individuals with the top jobs in the Trump Administration, Vox (12/27, Prokop) reports the Energy Department's "main responsibilities are overseeing the US nuclear weapons program, handling nuclear waste, running a set of national laboratories that conduct science and technological research, and funding R&D related to energy." During the Obama Administration, "much of the department's R&D emphasis has been on clean energy research." But Trump's selection of Perry, "a major ally of fossil fuel industries" likely signals "a shift back to favoring

conventional sources of energy.”

U.S. News & World Report (12/27, Neuhauser) reports “for the top energy and environment positions in his Cabinet,” Trump has chosen “three politicians who have cast doubt on human-induced climate change and opposed federal environmental regulations: Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt would lead the Environmental Protection Agency,” Perry, “and Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke” who “would oversee the Interior Department.”

King: Perry About To Lead World’s Biggest Science Department. The Las Vegas Sun (12/27) carries an open letter to President-elect Donald Trump’s choice to head the Energy Department former Gov. Rick Perry, by Llewellyn King, executive producer and host of ‘White House Chronicle’ on PBS. King writes that “oil, natural gas and coal are not the overriding concern of the DOE” but that “its main role is to be the nation’s armorer; to build and maintain the U.S. stockpile of nuclear weapons, and to detect bad guys testing weapons in places like North Korea and Iran.” The agency “has 17 major laboratories, headed by the three big weapons labs: Los Alamos, Sandia and Lawrence Livermore.” King adds, “You are, in fact, about to lead the largest science department anywhere in the world.” The agency’s “national laboratory system is a national treasure, the science mind of the nation.” King concludes “you have a great charge, Gov. Perry, and it has very little to do with oil.”

Rules/Regulations/Policy

NAM Makes Case For WOTUS In Supreme Court.

WMT-AM Cedar Rapids, IA (12/23) reports industry groups including the National Association of Manufacturers in a legal battle over the Environmental Protection Agency’s Waters of the US rule “want the U.S. Supreme Court to hear their challenge, instead of going through district court first.” The groups argue the Supreme Court “should hear the case because the incoming Trump administration’s vows to kill the rule, according to Politico.” In a court brief filed with the Supreme Court this week, the National Association of Manufacturers said the parties, the judiciary, and taxpayers “should not be required to endure that enormous expenditure of money and effort in a case that is proceeding in the wrong court, especially with the Trump administration likely to set off a new wave of legal maneuvering.”

Additional Reading.

- **EPA Tightens Up Chemical Plant Safety Regs.** Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal. (12/27, Bruggers)

Water

Michigan Attorney General: Consent Order Was Signed Based On “Sham” Manufactured By Flint City Officials.

The Detroit Free Press (12/27) reports Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette’s office “signed off on an environmental order that is central to new criminal charges...in his Flint drinking water investigation.” Schuette argues that a March 2014 administrative consent order which was signed by his office “never should have been issued, because it was based on a ‘sham’ environmental calamity manufactured” by city officials who tied an “ordered environmental cleanup at a sludge lagoon used by the Flint Water Treatment Plant...to the KWA.”

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